

ON NORTH BODMIN MOOR FROM BOLVENTOR TO LANLAVERY ROCK
AND BACK VIA THE HEADWATERS OF THE RIVER FOWEY (11 miles)
START POINT GRID REF 181765

We in Plymouth Ramblers are lucky in having two moorland areas close to us, Dartmoor on our doorstep and Bodmin Moor just across the Tamar. Even the Northern part of Bodmin Moor is only 40 minutes drive away from Plymouth.

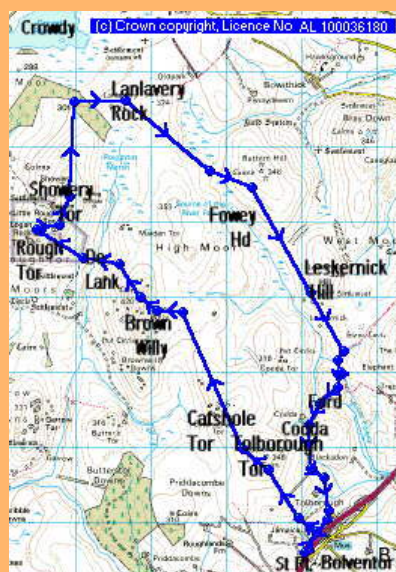
The walk we did on 11 Sep 02 was from one of our favourite start points for North Bodmin Moor, the car park near the disused church at Bolventor, where Jamaica Inn is situated, just across the main A30 dual carriageway from Plymouth.



Bodmin Moor has a completely different feel to it from Dartmoor, it can still be hostile in certain conditions though.

On the day we ventured out on our 11 miles outing to walk the Northern Moor and visit points like Brown Willy, Rough Tor, Lanlavery Rock and the head of the River Fowey it was a perfect walking day, beautifully sunny with temperatures in the low 20's, a cooling breeze and nigh on perfect visibility.

It was so good even Lundy Island could be picked out way out in the Bristol Channel from the top of some of the Tors.



An outline of the route we took across North Bodmin Moor is shown above. To best appreciate the route we took this outline should be looked at in conjunction with an OS 1:25000 map of Bodmin Moor such as the OS Explorer 109 map of the region.



The walk was led by John Warren and on the day we eventually ended up with 23 walkers out, all ready to enjoy the sunshine and the soft easy downland walking with the odd steep climb to get the lungs going.

After a briefing from John on where we would be going on the day we left the car park by Bolventor Church and headed off north east along the road for a

couple of hundred yards parallel to the A30 until we came to the footpath sign which would lead us up onto the moor itself.

Over the first stile of the day and north west down across a couple of fields towards a working farm nestled in the hollow below us, just a couple of hundred yards away.

The footpath exited the fields just before the farm at a point where the farmer seems to have an old JCB permanently parked, well it has been there for the last three years at least to my knowledge.

The farm is Dairywell Farm and the route passes to the right of the farmhouse, through a gate and then up a narrow enclosed lane heading still north west and climbing up to the moor above us.



It isn't very steep but rough in places, En route to the moor there are a couple of gates to pass through before emerging out onto Bodmin Moor itself, with Tolborough Tor ahead.



The path becomes less distinct at this point. Simply keep the Tor to the right and continue to climb up heading North West for about 500 yards until you come to a gate.

Ahead of you there is another Tor, Catshole Tor, this one is in enclosed land and not yet accessible to walkers on the moor. It is worth mentioning that Bodmin Moor is not like Dartmoor, a National Park

and does not benefit from the Open Access that we are used to on Dartmoor.

Although a path well used by walkers it is by the grace and favour of the landowners that we are able to make our way across the moor.

Through the gate keep to the right hand side of the enclosed land and pass by Catshole Tor walking now NNW.



Given favourable visibility you'll see the magnificent Tor of Brown Willy, the highest natural point on Bodmin Moor, indeed the highest point in Cornwall ahead of you.

Continue on along the path for about a mile heading in a straight line NNW.

Eventually you will come to an unmarked stile giving you access onto a track heading direct up to Brown Willy.



At the time of writing this description there is no marker sign with the stile although there were a couple of small marker flags there, relatively new these and there is no guarantee they'll be there the next time we visit.

The narrow path taken by countless walkers is clearly identifiable as it heads directly west first along slowly rising ground and then steeply up towards the summit

of Brown Willy itself.

Make no doubt about it the climb of only 120 metres ascent to the summit really is steep in places and it is not until you rise to the last rocks when the ground levels abruptly that you can breath a sigh or should I say a pant of relief that you are indeed at the top.

It is well worth the climb up to this, the highest natural point in Cornwall, still only 420 metres in height.

The views from here are very impressive on a good day and most people enjoy the few metre climb up to the trig point atop a rocky mound to make sure they really have visited the highest point.



On the day of the walk it seemed an ideal spot to stop for morning coffee and to spend 10 minutes enjoying the vista all round us.



Looking north west you can see the ground steeply descending down again to the valley through which the De Lank river flows and then rising equally steeply up again to more Tors and in particular Rough Tor.

This land around Rough Tor is now National Trust owned together with most of the ridge visible ahead.

If you have access to the OS map of Bodmin Moor or look carefully at the outline route you'll see the area NT own.

Leaving Brown Willy follow the track north and then north west as you descend steeply down to cross another stile and then still descending right down to the footbridge over the De Lank river.

For those who like to know the ups and downs of things the descent from Brown Willy is from an altitude of 420 m at the summit to one of 290 m at the point where the footbridge is over the river.

Yes we went up 120 m height gain to Brown Willy only to lose it all again plus a bit more on the other side. As I said, not to be missed!!



Don't worry though, once you've crossed the De Lank river, you will promptly gain almost all of it again as you make the pleasant climb up to the top of Rough Tor. For the purists I should add that Rough Tor is pronounced Row Tor, no not row as with boat oars, row as in a noisy argument. Too difficult, rough on you!!



Once again the climb up is best done by stopping just now and again to enjoy the views.

After the half a mile or so yomp up from the De Lank River you are again at the summit and if you look you'll see a memorial plaque describing how the area got to be given to the nation after the second world war.

The views from here are even better than those from Brown Willy since from here you can see right across to Camelford and beyond to the North Coast of Cornwall.

It is well worth spending a few minutes trying to pick out points of interest, providing of course you can see something.

On the previous visit I made to this area I was in thick cloud and could see nothing but water droplets. Not so today though as the accompanying photographs clearly show.

The walk route then takes us down from Rough Tor (405 m) and along the ridge NNE firstly by the slightly lower Tor called Little Rough Tor and then on further along to the end of the ridge and the spectacular Showery Tor.



This Tor is quite distinctive with its Cheesewring of Rocks atop it.



Once again superb views looking north to Crowdy Reservoir just beyond Roughtor plantation with Davistow Moor and the old wartime airfield at Davistow a few hundred yards to the north of the reservoir.

Our route down from Showery we headed down keeping due North and heading for the plantation.

En route we passed a cairn, partly overgrown but still clearly recognisable as a cairn and then a clump of rocks.

Walking in this area is truly wonderful with the lovely springy turf to absorb any impact.

And so we made our way down to the enclosed plantation with access to it via a gate.

There are really two plantations here and we made our way along at the narrowest point between the two plantations and soon arrived out onto moor once again.



It was now approaching 1 PM and we had been walking since 10 AM with breaks for coffee and to admire the views from the Tors.



Off to the west up an incline we could see Lanlavery Rocks about 500 yards or so away.

We headed directly towards them and very soon we were settling down for our hard earned lunch break to enjoy in the sun, resting against the rocks.

30 minutes later we were off again heading off south east across gently rising ground on our way back.

The plantations south of Crowdy reservoir had been the most northerly point of our walk.

As we got to the top of the rising ground we could see enclosed land off to our left and Buttern Hill ahead of us.

We continued on dropping down again as we continued on to the lower fringes of Buttern Hill and off to our right we could see what looked like a boggy area.

We had arrived at another point of significance and interest, the source of the River Fowey which starts in this boggy sump and flows down right across Cornwall by the clay mining area and



on down past Lostwithiel to the town of Fowey before reaching the sea and the deep natural sheltered harbour of the Fowey estuary.

A small and quite insignificant stream here, a deep water and sheltered anchorage some 30 miles south.

We followed the river keeping it to our right as it commenced its journey to the sea following the lower contours of Buttern Hill. We were now heading SE.



Further on from Buttern Hill still SE lies Leskernick Hill, surrounded by lots of rock scree.

The route taken by most on the day was down a steep gully and then up almost to the top of Leskernick Hill.

For those who prefer an easier route, keep to the right of Leskernick Hill and cross over a little easily crossed depression in the ground, dry when I did it and then simply head south towards the bottom of the rocky outcrops keeping the Fowey off to the right.

This is easy level walking and soon you will see a field system off to your right with trees and just beyond it a new disused homestead, once a farm perhaps.

If you have taken the harder route across the top of Leskernick you head South East from near the top and make your way down towards and to the right of the old and now disused farm.



Afternoon tea was taken just to the right of the Leskernick Hill.



Near the farm continue south and you should soon find a public right of way which is running North East to South West down off the moor.

Follow it down and off the moor through a gate.

Just beyond the gate the footpath forks into two routes, both shown on the OS map as rights of ways.

The left route will lead you SE and away from Bolventor. Unless you want to explore at this point don't take it.

Make sure you take the right hand path which heads up and along an narrow enclosed stony track before descending again to a ford across the now rather wider R Fowey.



In the two miles since the bare trickle of a stream it has already grown into a much wider flow of water.

You don't have to wade the ford since slightly downstream there is a small narrow footbridge to get you across with dry feet.

Follow the PROW up along a rough track and a short distance along you will find a working farm off to your right hand side.



This farm is called Codda Farm and the area is Codda.

From here you go through a gate and onto a tarmac narrow lane for the remainder of the walk of just over 1 mile.

Follow the tarmaced lane south and ahead of you lies the main dual carriageway down into Cornwall, the

A30.

We followed the lane as it descended south before swinging uphill again as it approached the underpass and the A30.

You will see the sign off to the right to Bolventor Church. Follow it and you are soon at the top of the rise and waking by the footpath which we had taken at the start of the walk.

The final little downhill section takes you back to the small car park and the church itself.

We were back at the car park again by about 3.30 and it had been a beautiful walk over some lovely landscape enhanced by such a wonderful late summers day, almost constant sunshine and perfect visibility.



If you have the time continue just beyond the car park to the gated entrance to the church.

It is a beautiful little church nestling in the trees and well worth a quick look.

A special mention should be made of John Warren had stood in for the original leader at very short notice and had led the walk well.

Thanks were rightly given to him for his sterling efforts in making sure that we had the opportunity to enjoy the walk and the day as much as we had done.

For once we had only minimal road walking with just over 1 mile in total.

I've noticed that it may be possible once beyond Codda Farm to reduce that even more to just 400 yards by taking a narrow untarmaced country track across south west above Dairywell Farm to pick up another footpath to bring us back to within a few yards of our car park.

Doubtless I'll be out there again on the moor to see how feasible that option actually is.

Do I really need an excuse to come back? Not really, but I didn't have time to round off the walk with a visit to the historic Jamaica Inn this time. On another visit I surely will !!